

COLLECTING JAMES HADLEY CHASE

HIS RACY AND VIOLENT THRILLERS ARE ACQUIRING CULT STATUS,
WRITE W.O.G. LOFTS AND D.J. ADLEY

Millions of people who have never heard of James Hadley Chase will certainly know the title of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. The book horrified critics when it first appeared in 1939; they classified it as degenerate and immoral, statements which certainly helped to make it a best-seller. Well over a million copies were sold in a short space of time. The book disgusted George Orwell so much that he wrote an essay highlighting its sickness and decadence. But standards have changed a great deal since then and anyone reading the book today will probably find it quite tame; they certainly mustn't expect to be shocked.

VIOLENT

James Hadley Chase wrote over eighty sexy and violent crime novels during his long career which ended with his death on 6 February 1985, but it's interesting to note that Chase the man was nothing like the books he produced.

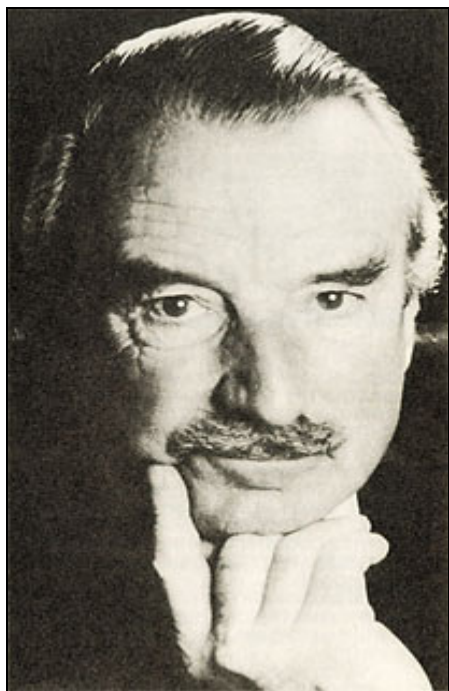


Photo courtesy of Robert Hale Ltd.

Living at his home in Switzerland his life was far removed from his characters' - he spent much of his time tending his garden, listening to classical music and chain-smoking his favourite cigarettes. His real name was René Lodge Brabazon Raymond, and he was born on Christmas Eve 1906 in Ealing, West London, not far from the birthplace of Frank Richards, the creator of Billy Bunter and Greyfriars. His father was Colonel Francis Harvey Raymond who had served as a veterinary medical officer in the Indian Army.

When he was seventeen Chase quarreled with his father and left their home in Hastings, Sussex to make his own way in the world. After a two-year spell as a door-to-door salesman hawk-ing Children's Encyclopaedias around Hastings, he joined the wholesale book firm of Simpkin Marshall to look after their book distribution to the retail stores and to the 'tuppenny' lending libraries.

This experience prompted him to write his first book. Through his work Chase noticed that it was not the traditional English style of crime stories that libraries were requesting, but rather the hard-boiled thrillers by writers like Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. When he saw how quickly copies of James Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* ran out, he decided to try writing one himself.

By this time he was in his early twenties, married, and earning the slight-ly higher than average wage of £310s a week. Nevertheless, he felt he could put together the same type of racy, violent and sexy thriller that was emerging from America. The result was *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*.

HEIRESS

Based loosely on a brief news item Chase saw concerning a kidnapped American heiress whose ordeal had sent her out of her mind, the

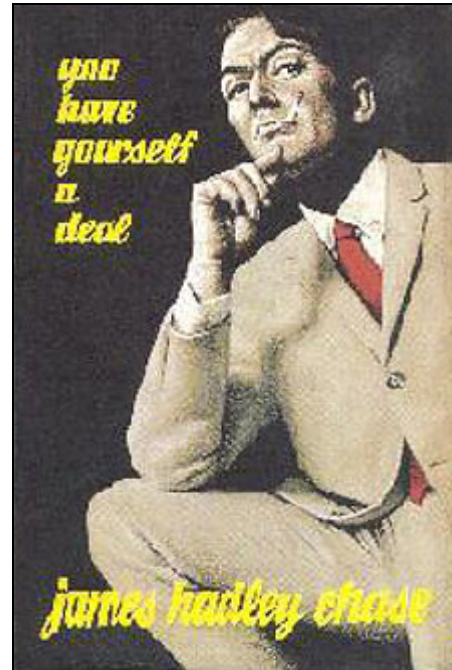
book took Chase just six weekends to write. The magic title which sold the book is supposed to have been thought up whilst he was taking a bath. The strong criticism of his first book not only helped sales but also led to a stage adaptation produced in collaboration with Robert Nesbitt; it opened at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London in July 1942, and enjoyed a long and successful run with Hartley Power in the rather exacting role of Dave Fenner. Strangely enough, in later years Chase felt that *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* was probably the worst book he had ever written.



This attractive jacket adorned the first edition of *Tiger by the Tail*. Published by Robert Hale in 1954, Very Good copies sell for around £4-£6 today.

After two more novels (*The Dead Stay Dumb* and *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*), Jarrolds published *Miss Callaghan Comes to Grief* (1941) and advertised his next book as *Get a Load of This*, a collection of fourteen stories with some tough episodes in a volume due for publication in the autumn of 1941. No tangible proof has been found that this book ever appeared, though some confusion was aroused in collecting circles a few years ago when an enthusiast claimed to have seen a copy. There is a school of thought that the book was withdrawn due to an action by the authorities against both publisher and author. It is quite possible, therefore, that some copies were printed and perhaps found their way into circulation before

most were withdrawn from sale and distribution. It is not listed in either the British Library Catalogue or the *English Catalogue of Printed Books*.



Apart from the disputed rarity *Get a Load of This* and his early titles, no Chase thriller should cost too much. *You Have Yourself a Deal* (1966) sells for £3-£4.

Revised editions of James Hadley Chase's early novels were issued in 1943. These included *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*, a title which had resulted in a legal action. *Chinks* was later toned down to *Chinamen*, and much later still it was reissued as a Panther paperback entitled *Doll's Bad News*.

No new titles appeared until 1944, because during the war years Chase served with distinction as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force (the same ranking as his friend David Langdon, the famous cartoonist). He edited the *Royal Air Force journal* which at its peak sold around 50,000 copies a month. Extracts from the newspaper were published in book form as *Slipstream* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946), one of the high-lights of which was Chase's short story "The Mirror in Room 22". This was published under his real name, R. Raymond. Incidentally, several James Hadley Chase tales were first issued under the pseudonym of Raymond Marshall, and these seem quite hard to acquire today. All these were later reissued as Panther or Corgi paperbacks under the Chase byline. Completists will want to acquire both versions.



Many Chase novels were first issued under pseudonyms. *Make the Corpse Walk* by 'Raymond Marshall' was published by Jarrolds in 1946.

James Hadley Chase didn't follow the lead of other thriller writers and develop distinctive series characters, but he did use some on more than one occasion. One example is Dave Fenner, an ex-newspaper reporter turned private detective. He first appeared in *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* and turned up again in Chase's third novel *Twelve Chinks and a Woman*. At one time Vic Malloy looked as though he might become Chase's main character when he appeared in *You're Lonely When You're Dead* (Robert Hale, 1949), followed by the two next novels in quick succession. He was a private detective on the Californian coast where his cases involved murder, blackmail and kidnapping. Others were Don Micklem, created under the Raymond Marshall pseudonym in *Mission in Venice* (Robert Hale, 1954); 'Brick-Top Corridon' who appeared in Marshall's *Mallory* (Jarrolds, 1950); and Mark Girland who first appeared in *This is for Real* (Robert Hale, 1965). Girland was an ex-C.I.A. agent who spent much of his time lounging around Paris making a living any way he could.

There were also many incidental characters who were interestingly drawn. Steve Harmas, Insurance Investigator for the National Fidelity Insurance Co. and his head claims adjustor Maddox could smell a phoney insurance claim a mile away. They made their first appearance in

The Double Shuffle (Robert Hale, 1952). Other favourites are the officers from Paradise City, Florida, Police Department: Captain Terrell, Sergeant Joe Biegler and Detective Tom Lepskie. They first appeared in *The Soft Centre* (Robert Hale, 1964). As far as crooks were concerned Herman Radnitz, a wealthy tycoon involved in many dubious situations with his hired killer Lu Silk who makes trouble for Mark Girland in *This is for Real* and *Whiff of Money* stand out.

The majority of James Hadley Chase's books feature America and its gangsters, and all were written without any first-hand knowledge of the country or its people. With the aid of a large atlas, guides, directories and slang dictionaries, Chase became astonishingly adept at creating convincing American locations and characters.

When he set his thrillers in England, however, the style somehow changed. A good example is *The Paw in the Bottle* (by Raymond Marshall, Jarrolds, 1949), a novel set in London and full of familiar street names and locale. The dialogue is a curious mixture of English expressions and Americanese slang.

INSPIRATION

In 1960 Chase took a trip to the Far East, and while he was there he had the inspiration for two novels, *A Lotus for Miss Quon* (Robert Hale, 1960), a thriller set in Vietnam, and *A Coffin from Hong Kong* (Robert Hale, 1962). According to the experts, this departure was successful and these were perhaps his two best titles, but Chase preferred his familiar American gangster theme and continued to focus on this speciality right up to the end of his career.

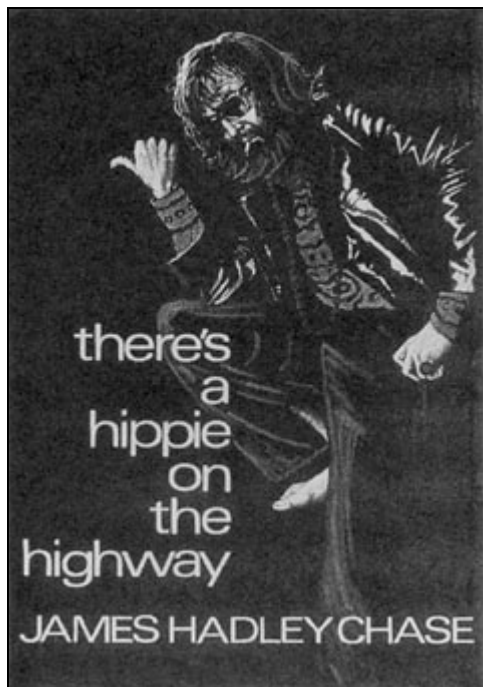
Whatever the theme, Chase's books are always extremely easy to read, and the reader seldom has to stretch his mental powers to elucidate the plot. The general public liked it that way, but on at least one occasion one highbrow detective fiction critic described Chase's style as sloppy, and claimed that he invariably failed to 'tie up' his plots at the end of his books. Nevertheless, his books were thrillers in every sense of the word, even if he had no pretensions to write in the Agatha Christie red herring jigsaw puzzle mould.

DOWNFALL

Many Chase novels had the simple theme of a man's downfall caused by a scheming woman:

some had rather humble jobs and were tempted either by passion or blackmail to easy riches! Eventually, though, these characters would be taken for suckers and ruined, invariably ending up poorer than before, or at times even being wanted for murder.

James Hadley Chase himself freely admitted that his early books left a lot to be desired, and like many other writers (including Leslie Charteris) often revised and improved his early work for later editions. In fact, he often revised his early titles so much that the collector is advised to look out for both the original and revised editions. The stories remain the same but the books can be wholly dissimilar. An excellent example of this is *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. A French edition translated from Chase's revised version even has a publisher's note stating that the book had actually been rewritten by the author. He felt the original text written in pre-war days would no longer be acceptable to the present generation, and that the controversial story should be presented in a different manner. Another example is *Twelve Chinks and a Woman* where the revised edition is far more startling than the original, and as we've seen it appeared under at least two other titles.



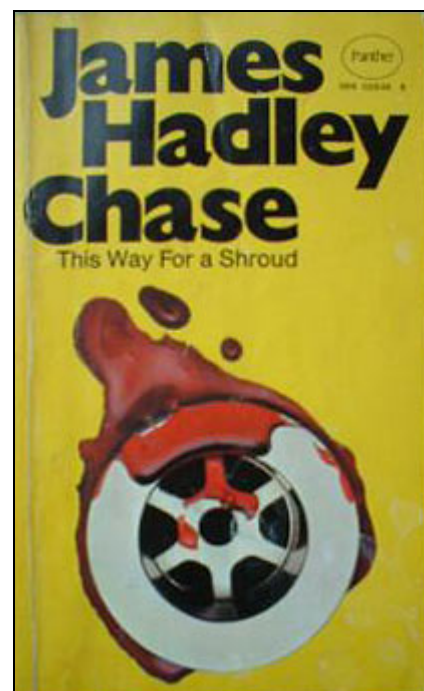
As you might imagine from the cover design to this book, *There's a Hippie on the Highway* was published by Robert Hale in 1970. It sells for £3-£4 today.

James Hadley Chase's work has often been likened to that of Hank Janson; indeed, Janson readers very often graduate to Chase, although

there is one marked bibliographical difference between the two authors. Hank Janson was probably the King of Pulp Fiction, whereas Chase's books were always first published in hardback format with dustjackets, particularly after he was taken up by the well-established firm of Robert Hale. They were first class publishers in every respect, and their advertising and distribution guaranteed high sales. Each edition was also reprinted as often as necessary in paperback format, so copies of Chase's books in at least one format or edition should be very easy to find in almost every second-hand bookshop.

PROVOCATIVE

Most Chase paperbacks were published by Panther or Corgi, who relied heavily on provocative cover artwork to keep sales high -scantly-clad girls were (and still are) used whether they have any relevance to the story or not. Many of Chase's books were also filmed, bringing in enormous fees for their author. Some were actually first made in France and shown in Britain with sub-titles.



Almost all James Hadley Chase's atmospheric and slightly seedy thrillers have been issued as paperbacks. This Panther reprint shouldn't cost more than a £1.

No Orchids for Miss Blandish was first filmed in England in 1946 and was quite successful, though more for its reputation than its quality. Linden Travers played Miss Blandish

and Jack la Rue was Slim Grissom, the menacing gangster who after kidnapping the heiress was more interested in keeping her for his own desires than any ransom money she might attract! The story was filmed again in 1971, this time starring Kim Darby and retitled *The Grissom Gang*. There is little doubt that the origins of this story can be traced to the real life doings of the infamous Ma Baker and her killer sons.

INTERVIEWS

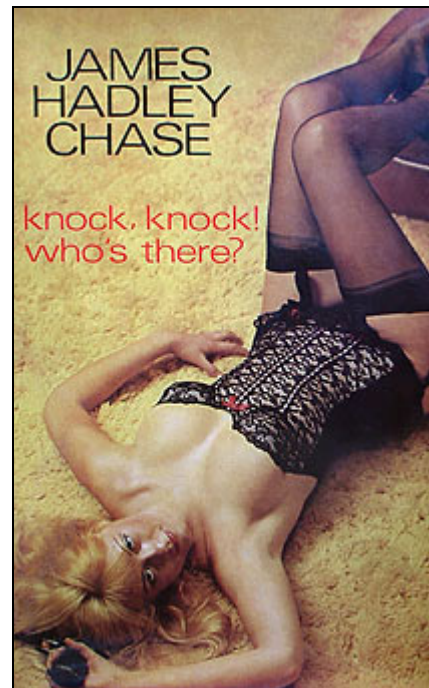
During his lifetime James Hadley Chase refused to give any press interviews, nor did he write any introductions to his novels. He firmly believed that his job was to write readable thriller stories for the general public, not to give lengthy details of his background or self-indulgent analyses of his literary influences.

Chase was an outright professional novelist, and he stuck to his job. Many a traveller who bought a James Hadley Chase paperback from a railway book-stall to relieve an otherwise tedious journey would undoubtedly have agreed with him.

INEVITABLE

James Hadley Chase still has many books in print in paperback format, and they are still selling very well. He is attracting new readers all the time. As more readers enjoy his work it's almost inevitable that some will try to collect the first appearance of their favourite books. His first editions are not so common today as they used to be, particularly if their all important dust-jackets highlighting wonderful period cover art are intact and in nice, clean condition but it is still possible to pick up Very Good or Fine copies of most of his books for not more than a few pounds each. Get them today,

though, because it's unlikely they will be so common in the years to come.



Several of Chase's later novels have provocative cover designs. *Knock, Knock!* first appeared in 1973

TASK

Compiling a James Hadley Chase bibliography is by no means a simple task: with so many reprints it has led to considerable difficulty in dating first editions and tracking titles. Most of Chase's books were undated when first published, and in many cases the details given in the *English Catalogue of Printed Books* differ from those given in the British Library Catalogue. However, it is believed that any inaccuracies in the bibliography have been kept to the very minimum. *Book & Magazine Collector* would welcome any amendments enthusiasts may be aware of.

JAMES HADLEY CHASE COMPLETE UK BIBLIOGRAPHY

A guide to current values of first editions in VG condition with dustjackets

NO ORCHIDS FOR MISS BLANDISH (Jarrolds, 1939)	£25-£30
THE DEAD STAY DUMB (Jarrolds, 1940)	£10-£20
TWELVE CHINKS AND A WOMAN (Jarrolds, 1940)	£15-£20
MISS CALLAGHAN COMES TO GRIEF (Jarrolds, 1941)	£10-£15
GET A LOAD OF THIS (Jarrolds, c.1941)	£80-£100
MISS SHUMWAY WAVES A WAND (Jarrolds, 1944; non-mystery)	£8-£10
EVE (Jarrolds, 1945; non-mystery)	£5-£10
I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS (Jarrolds, 1947)	£5-£10

LAST PAGE (French, 1947; play)	£4-£6
THE FLESH OF THE ORCHID (Jarrolds, 1948)	£5-£10
YOU NEVER KNOW WITH WOMEN (Jarrolds, 1948)	£5-£10
YOU'RE LONELY WHEN YOU'RE DEAD (Robert Hale, 1949)	£5-£10
LAY HER AMONG LILIES (Robert Hale, 1950)	£4-£6
FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOURSELF (Robert Hale, 1950)	£4-£6
STRICTLY FOR CASH (Robert Hale, 1951)	£4-£6
THE DOUBLE SHUFFLE (Robert Hale, 1952)	£4-£6
THE FAST BUCK (Robert Hale, 1952)	£4-£6
I'LL BURY MY DEAD (Robert Hale, 1953).....	£4-£6
THIS WAY FOR A SHROUD (Robert Hale, 1953)	£4-£6
TIGER BY THE TAIL (Robert Hale, 1954)	£4-£6
SAFER DEAD (Robert Hale, 1954).....	£4-£6
YOU'VE GOT IT COMING (Robert Hale, 1955).....	£4-£6
THERE'S ALWAYS A PRICE TAG (Robert Hale, 1956)	£4-£6
THE GUILTY ARE AFRAID (Robert Hale, 1957)	£3-£4
NOT SAFE TO BE FREE (Robert Hale, 1958).....	£3-£4
SHOCK TREATMENT (Robert Hale, 1959)	£3-£4
THE WORLD IN MY POCKET (Robert Hale, 1959)	£3-£4
WHAT'S BETTER THAN MONEY (Robert Hale, 1960)	£3-£4
COME EASY - GO EASY (Robert Hale 1960)	£3-£4
A LOTUS FOR MISS QUON (Robert Hale, 1961)	£3-£4
JUST ANOTHER SUCKER (Robert Hale, 1961)	£3-£4
I WOULD RATHER STAY POOR (Robert Hale, 1962)	£3-£4
A COFFIN FROM HONG KONG (Robert Hale, 1962)	£3-£4
TELL IT TO THE BIRDS (Robert Hale 1963)	£3-£4
ONE BRIGHT SUMMER MORNING (Robert Hale, 1963)	£3-£4
THE SOFT CENTRE (Robert Hale, 1964)	£3-£4
THIS IS FOR REAL (Robert Hale, 1965)	£3-£4
THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES (Robert Hale, 1965)	£3-£4
YOU HAVE YOURSELF A DEAL (Robert Hale, 1966)	£3-£4
CADE (Robert Hale, 1966)	£3-£4
HAVE THIS ONE ON ME (Robert Hale, 1967)	£3-£4
WELL NOW, MY PRETTY . . . (Robert Hale, 1967)	£3-£4
AN EAR TO THE GROUND (Robert Hale, 1968)	£3-£4
BELIEVED VIOLENT (Robert Hale, 1968)	£3-£4
THE WHIFF OF MONEY (Robert Hale, 1969)	£3-£4
THE VULTURE IS A PATIENT BIRD (Robert Hale, 1969)	£3-£4
THERE'S A HIPPIE ON THE HIGHWAY (Robert Hale, 1970)	£3-£4
LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD (Robert Hale, 1970)	£2-£3
THE DOLL'S BAD NEWS (Panther, 1970).....	£1-£2
(paperback reissue of `Twelve Chinks and a Woman')	
AN ACE UP MY SLEEVE (Robert Hale, 1971)	£2-£3
WANT TO STAY ALIVE? (Robert Hale, 1971)	£2-£3
YOU'RE DEAD WITHOUT MONEY (Robert Hale, 1972)	£2-£3
JUST A MATTER OF TIME (Robert Hale, 1972)	£2-£3
KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE? (Robert Hale, 1973)	£2-£3
HAVE A CHANGE OF SCENE (Robert Hale, 1973)	£2-£3
SO WHAT HAPPENS TO ME? (Robert Hale, 1974)	£2-£3
GOLDFISH HAVE NO HIDING PLACE (Robert Hale, 1974)	£2-£3
BELIEVE THIS YOU'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING (Robert Hale, 1975).....	£2-£3
THE JOKER IN THE PACK (Robert Hale, 1975)	£2-£3

DO ME A FAVOUR - DROP DEAD ((Robert Hale, 1976)	£2-£3
MY LAUGH COMES LAST (Robert Hale, 1977)	£2-£3
I HOLD THE FOUR ACES (Robert Hale, 1977)	£2-£3
CONSIDER YOURSELF DEAD (Robert Hale, 1978)	£2-£3
CAN OF WORMS (Robert Hale, 1979)	£2-£3
YOU MUST BE KIDDING (Robert Hale, 1979)	£2-£3
TRY THIS ONE FOR SIZE (Robert Hale, 1980)	£2-£3
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN (Robert Hale, 1980)	£2-£3
HAND ME A FIG LEAF (Robert Hale, 1981)	£2-£3
HAVE A NICE NIGHT (Robert Hale, 1982)	£2-£3
WE'LL SHARE A DOUBLE FUNERAL (Robert Hale, 1982)	£2-£3
NOT MY THING (Robert Hale, 1983)	£2-£3
HIT THEM WHERE IT HURTS (Robert Hale, 1984)	£2-£3

ANTHOLOGIES

THREE OF SPADES (Robert Hale, 1974)	£4-£6
<i>(contains 'The Double Shuffle', 'Shock Treatment' and 'Tell it to the Birds')</i>	
MEET MARK GIRLAND (Robert Hale, 1977)	£4-£6
MEET HELGA ROLFE (Robert Hale, 1984)	£3-£5

TITLES ISSUED UNDER RAYMOND MARSHALL' PSEUDONYM

LADY-HERE'S YOUR WREATH (Jarrolds, 1940)	£10-£15
JUST THE WAY IT IS (Jarrolds, 1944)	£4-£6
BLONDE'S REQUIEM (Jarrolds, 1945, never reissued as by J.H.C.)	£10-£15
MAKE THE CORPSE WALK (Jarrolds, 1946)	£5-£10
NO BUSINESS OF MINE (Jarrolds, 1947)	£8-£10
TRUSTED LIKE A FOX (Jarrolds, 1948)	£5-£10
THE PAW IN THE BOTTLE (Jarrolds, 1949)	£5-£10
MALLORY (Jarrolds, 1950)	£4-£6
IN A VAIN SHADOW (Jarrolds, 1951)	£4-£6
BUT A SHORT TIME TO LIVE (Jarrolds, 1951)	£5-£8
WHY PICK ON ME? (Jarrolds, 1951)	£4-£6
THE WARY TRANSGRESSOR (Jarrolds, 1952)	£4-£6
THE THINGS MEN DO (Jarrolds, 1953)	£4-£6
THE SUCKER PUNCH (Jarrolds, 1954)	£4-£6
MISSION TO VENICE (Robert Hale, 1954)	£4-£6
MISSION TO SIENA (Robert Hale, 1955)	£4-£6
YOU FIND HIM-I'LL FIX HIM (Robert Hale, 1956)	£4-£6
HIT AND RUN (Robert Hale, 1958)	£4-£6

TITLE ISSUED UNDER JAMES L. DOCHERTY' PSEUDONYM

HE WON'T NEED IT NOW (Rich & Cowan, 1939)	£15-£20
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TITLE ISSUED UNDER AMBROSE GRANT' PSEUDONYM

MORE DEADLY THAN THE MALE (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946)	£8-£10
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